

Executive Director's Report
Workforce Board Meeting, February 23—Meeting No. 261

The Workforce Board has seen a great deal of staff turn-over recently, not unlike so many other employers. We've also experienced the phenomenon where individuals accept a job with us, and even start working while they negotiate for another position elsewhere. On the upside, so many transitions have opened the Workforce Board's doors to some terrific new associates. I wish you could them all in person today, but for now, we provide some mini bios.

Before you go there though, I have to let you know about a transition for one of our staff who is near and dear to all our hearts, Erica Wollen. Thankfully, Erica is staying with the agency, but she will no longer be the Board's secretary or my executive assistant. Here is the note about Erica's transition that I sent to our staff:

I am happy to announce that my long-time executive assistant, our board secretary and foundational member of the leadership team and this organization has accepted a new position within the organization. Erica Wollen will be one of the state's first ever LPN Apprenticeship Navigators! This is a pivotal role within the new Long-term care LPN Apprenticeship program that Donald is helping to establish with a large group of LTC industry, education, and state agency partners.

We are thrilled that Erica has accepted this role! We need an innovator and problem solver, as well as someone who is compassionate, with a nimble mind, who enjoys working with all types of people and is buoyed by helping others achieve success. I know first-hand how talented and passionate Erica is. Her work as our State Disability Council Liaison, and let's face it, keeping me on track for all these years, the terrific relationships she's established with our board members and partners across the system—Erica will be a dynamite navigator for the very deserving LTC workers she'll be supporting. Erica also never hesitates to take on new challenges—she's a consummate learner—another talent that will help her in the navigator role. She'll be helping us learn about what is working, what isn't, and where the gaps and opportunities are as we think about how to improve this new program and potentially take it to scale.

On a personal note, I want to say a giant "Thank You!" to Erica for being such a tremendous support to me and to our organization for so many years. Erica, I have so appreciated your positive, "just do it" spirit, even as you were taking on additional responsibilities to an already over-loaded workload. Your commitment to the organization's mission and its people--our family--has always been front and center. Although I will miss working so closely with you every day (yes, I am panicked about that.) I am so thankful that you have chosen to stay with this organization as you start your new adventure.

Please join me in congratulating Erica on her new position!

I also have to thank Erica for continuing to support me and the Board for the past couple months while she's begun her new job. It's typical of Erica to not let any of the balls drop while she personally made it her mission to find a suitable replacement for us. Thanks to Erica's efforts, today you are meeting our new Board secretary and my executive assistant, Bianca Laxton. Welcome Bianca!!

New Associates—Mini Bios

Bianca Laxton

Bianca Laxton joins the Workforce Board as Executive Assistant to Eleni Papadakis as well as Board Secretary. Most recently, she worked for the Washington Workforce Association, where she learned about and discovered her passion for the field of workforce development. Her diverse work history includes serving in the US Navy as an electrician, a position in the juvenile court school system as a teacher's assistant and working in the video game industry as a game tester and executive assistant. We are excited to have Bianca's diverse experiences and skills, as well as her enthusiasm for the work of our organization. She has lived in Washington for nearly four years and greatly enjoys hiking, camping, knitting, sewing, and learning Spanish. She especially enjoys creative writing and hopes to write children's books.

Anthony Whitesides

Anthony is our newest VA Vocational Education Program Specialist, and we are so excited to have him. As part of the VA team, he will conduct risk-based surveys and process school authorizations. He's already utilizing his financial background to review school financial statements. Anthony joined the Navy right out of high school and spent five years working with weapons onboard an Aircraft Carrier. He deployed twice, traveled worldwide, and learned a lot. After he got out, he studied Economics at Western Washington University, where he earned his bachelor's degree. He's worked extensively in the WWU Veteran's Office and got a taste for some of the work we do here at the Consumer Protection unit. After that, he worked for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and returned to Graduate School. In his free time, he enjoys buying and fixing old European cars, traveling, working out, and learning new skills. He also likes working with his hands in the yard or doing home improvement projects. He's looking forward to working with everybody at the Workforce Board and making an impact in the work that we do!

Rebecca Adams

The Workforce Board welcomed Rebecca Adams on January 1, as one of the two new Apprenticeship Navigators in the Long-Term Care (LTC) project. Rebecca comes to the Workforce Board from the state's Department of Children, Youth and Families. In her role as Navigator, she will offer guidance to home care aids and nursing assistants interested in the LPN apprentice program. Her work will help the HCA and NAC paraprofessionals establish a work/life balance and direct them to resources needed to help them succeed and complete their goal to become an LPN.

Rebecca was raised in Texas. While in middle school, Rebecca developed a passion for LTC. After school each day, she would take the bus to her mother's job as a hospice care provider. She would spend time in the dining hall talking with nurses and patients and learning the ins and outs of the facility. She was grateful for those interactions with residents and staff. Rebecca is currently enrolled in coursework with a goal of attending nursing school. She is excited to be a vital part of the NAC to LPN apprenticeship team with the Workforce Board.

Chris Dula

Chris Dula has been hired as a Senior Researcher with an emphasis on the Long-Term Care (LTC) Workforce Initiative. Chris brings extensive experience in data management and analysis that will be critical to the success of the Workforce Board's LTC workforce efforts. As part of the in-house research staff, and in collaboration with our external partners, Chris' work will be used to develop strategies to impact the LTC Workforce crisis across the state. Chris Dula is returning to the Workforce Board after working for DSHS for a few years. Chris received the Congressional Award for his national service as a former AmeriCorps and Peace Corps Thailand volunteer. He holds a Bachelor of Economics from Metropolitan State University of Denver and a Master's Degree, specialized in advanced policy and economic analysis from Columbia University in New York City. Chris has 15 years of professional experience in government and academia. His work as a researcher for Singapore Management University has been published in the Harvard Business Review and Financial Times. Chris has served the State of Washington for six years as an expert in qualitative and quantitative research methods and empirical design, with an emphasis on program and policy evaluation. His interests include post-scarcity economics, cosmology, epistemology, and gardening. Chris most enjoys peaceful days outside and going on adventures with his family along the Olympic Peninsula and Columbia River Gorge.

Drew Cassidy

Drew Cassidy joins us on March 1 in a new role as the Workforce Service Integration Manager. This new position was created to identify and support policy recommendations that enhance and support effective service integration and address the administrative barriers jobseekers and businesses face when they seek assistance from various workforce programs. Drew will work closely with WIOA-funded programs and others in our state's comprehensive workforce development system to understand the challenges faced in aligning policies, programs, and funding streams to ensure seamless service delivery for job seekers and employers.

Drew comes to the Workforce Board from the Employment Security Department, where she worked as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Employment System Policy and Integrity Division. Prior to ESD, Drew worked at South Puget Sound Community College and WorkSource Thurston, where she saw firsthand the impact of public policies on training and employment outcomes. Drew's prior work has been instrumental in shaping state policies on unemployment insurance and workforce development. Drew holds a degree in political science from Oregon State University, and a master's degree in public administration from Evergreen State College.

In Drew's spare time, she can be found traveling the world, jumping off waterfalls, hiking big mountains, and parasailing above the Pacific. She also recently adopted two rescue kittens who are an absolute joy and have given her a reason to stay home a bit more and cuddle up in front of the fire with a good book. Drew is committed to improving the lives of workers and business owners by improving economic outcomes, and she is so excited to be part of the team at the Workforce Board.

Claire Fite

Claire Fite (she/her) is joining us as a Long-Term Care Policy Associate, and will work with Donald and Nova on the health workforce team. She is a recent graduate of the University of Washington School of Social Work and Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. Originally from San Luis Obispo, California, she moved to Washington to serve as an AmeriCorps Member at the City of Bellevue. In past roles, Claire has worked with people experiencing housing instability, survivors of domestic violence, and older adults. She also speaks Russian at a level that has been admirably described as "passable." Educated as a social worker, Claire is passionate about combining her social service experience and

policy skills to help make her community a better, more equitable place to live. Claire loves reading, cooking, crafting, spending time outside, and talking about her two beloved cats!

Long-Term Care (LTC) Workforce Initiatives

The HCA/NAC to LPN Apprenticeship has made significant progress since August of 2022, led by Workforce Board staff member Dr. Donald Smith, our LTC Workforce Policy Manager. The first cohort of NACs and HCAs are currently working on their pre-requisite courses at three community and technical colleges (Edmonds, Bates [Tacoma], and Yakima Valley) in anticipation of submitting their application to the apprenticeship program. A second cohort will be selected by participating employers shortly.

Key milestones include:

- Hiring of two Apprenticeship Navigators by the Workforce Board. Erica Wollen moved to one of the Navigator spots from her previous role as Board Secretary and Executive Assistant for Eleni Papadakis. Rebecca Adams (more on her in her bio) joined the Workforce Board from DCYF. Both Navigators began their new roles on January 1, 2023.
- The development of a digital wallet coupled with a data management system is underway in collaboration with Merit systems. Merit is also scheduled to provide training for the Navigators on their new role. Training is set for early March.
- Edmonds College has completed the online curriculum and is set to begin review with the state's Nursing Commission in February. Edmonds is looking to the Fall 2023 Quarter to launch the online curriculum as a pilot. The apprenticeship curriculum will be developed from the online curriculum with minor modifications.
- Board staff have begun discussions with the Greater Spokane Incorporated to identify opportunities for collaboration in the Spokane area. Potential collaborations include the efforts to establish a statewide digital wallet system, LTC Initiative and establishment of LPN Apprenticeships on the eastern side of the state.
- The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs has asked to join the LPN Apprenticeship group and has begun to offer input for the program. Anticipated DVA staff enrollment in the pre-requisite coursework at the local community colleges could begin in Fall 2023.

Another LTC project, the LTC Workforce Initiative, is underway and we continue to recruit partners to join the initiative. Working with Workforce Board staff member Renee Fullerton (Health & Social Policy Associate, on Nova's team) and other agency staff, the Initiative has attracted interest from many involved with the Health Workforce Council. A Leadership Committee will formally convene for the first time on Feb 21 and will guide the direction of the project as well as assist in the development of collaborations with professionals across the state. The Leadership group is a mixture of healthcare, education, state agencies and business interests. The group is also actively looking for direct care service providers to serve on the Leadership group.

Agreements for comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research efforts conducted in partnership with the University of Washington and other potential partners are being finalized. The research will offer a comprehensive look at the workforce situation in Washington and will serve as the basis for annual reports to the legislature starting in the summer of this year.

The LTC Workforce webpage has been recently updated and will serve as a source of information about the LTC Initiatives. Discussions are also underway for the establishment of a webpage for the LTC-Initiative and the LPN Apprenticeship program. More at: <https://wtb.wa.gov/long-term-care/>

Health Workforce Council

The [2022 Health Workforce Council Report](#) was published in January 2023. This report captures the work of the Council in 2022 (Workforce Board staff member Renee Fullerton is the lead staff to the Council) and includes recommendations regarding childcare access, collecting more data about our health workforce and expanding approaches to address educational debt including evaluation of the Washington Health Corps.

The report also highlights the continuation of a concerning trend in decreasing completions of health professional career training. As recently as the 2019 reporting period, the Workforce Board tracked nearly 30,000 health professions program completions. Two years later, that number had dropped to 22,478 completions (6,651 reduction) across a wide range of healthcare occupations, typically in entry-level roles. Across all professions, that works out to an annual 11.4 percent drop in completions during the two years ending in 2021. This is highly concerning, with potentially severe ongoing healthcare workforce implications.

[HB 1503](#), which relates to the Council's data recommendation, is currently under consideration in the House. This bill would require all health care professionals licensed by the Department of Health to provide basic demographic and practice information at the time of application and renewal.

Health Workforce Council 2023 Meetings

- 9 am – 1 pm, March 23, 2023. [Register here for the Zoom meeting link](#). Agenda to come.
- 9 am – 1 pm, June 22, 2023.
- 9 am – 1 pm, September 21, 2023.
- 9 am – 1 pm, November 30, 2023.

Behavioral Health Workforce Assessment/Behavioral Health Workforce Advisory Committee

The [2022 Behavioral Health Workforce Assessment](#) was published in December 2022. Board staff partnered with Halcyon Northwest, a research contractor, to assess the status and relevance of prior recommendations made as part of the Workforce Board's Behavioral Health Workforce Assessments done in 2016-17, 2019-20, and 2021. This work was combined with two other research efforts done as part of a separate legislative proviso by the UW Center for Health Workforce Studies (UW CHWS) and Washington STEM to create a more complete picture for policymakers.

The completed document is a comprehensive assessment on progress towards prior recommendations as well as making new recommendations to expand approaches to address educational debt burden and work toward Washington becoming a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic demonstration state. The CCBHC model allows community behavioral health facilities to move towards sustainable, prospective payment system for providing comprehensive community behavioral health services.

Behavioral Health Report in The Seattle Times, Vancouver Business Journal

Seattle Times reporter Michelle Baruchman interviewed Policy Associate Renee Fullerton, Deputy Director Nova Gattman and Executive Director Eleni Papadakis on Jan. 18 about the Behavioral Health Workforce Assessment.

The committee's report was cited in this Jan. 22 story: ["How to fix the mental health workforce? WA has an underutilized workforce: peer counselors."](#)

The report was also featured in the [Vancouver Business Journal](#) on Jan. 4.

Board co-chairs Gary Chandler and Larry Brown also submitted an op ed to the Times about ongoing shortages in Washington's behavioral health workforce, and the need to invest in a comprehensive strategy between the private and public sectors to address the challenge.

Agency Audit

The Washington State Auditor's Office just concluded an accountability audit of the agency with an exit meeting on February 13. The audit covered the period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2022. Overall, the results were satisfactory, but did identify one audit finding. The finding is specific to our Consumer Protection Unit, which performs licensing and oversight of private career schools. The auditor found that our IT/software system and staffing shortages contributed to errors in, and a lack of controls on, the calculation and collection of fees from licensed schools. The report acknowledges that we have purchased and are in the process of implementing a new software package. Because implementation occurs after the period covered by the audit, the report must identify the finding and call for corrective action. Staff will provide a corrective action plan and timeline, which will describe the implementation plan for the new software.

Conferences

NGA Winter Workforce Symposium in Washington, D.C.—February 7-10

Workforce Board co-chairs Gary Chandler and Larry Brown, along with agency Executive Director Eleni Papadakis and Director of Workforce System Advancement Marina Parr attended the annual National Governors Association winter conference in "the other Washington" February 7-10. D.C. had unusually sunny, warm weather, which made walking to evening receptions pleasant. But most hours were spent inside of hotel ballrooms and conference rooms discussing state workforce challenges and initiatives.



This conference draws Workforce Board chairs from across the U.S., along with state liaisons. ESD Commissioner Cami Feek was unable to attend due to scheduling issues. The Workforce Board team was able to network, listen and learn to a variety of innovative work going on nationally. The team also was updated on federal policies and new congressional leaders heading up workforce committees and initiatives. Of particular interest at this conference was how best to support people who have been incarcerated, trying to re-enter the workforce; supporting workers who have experienced barriers due to mental health problems, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic; and expanding opportunities for immigrants to fill critical workforce needs. Marina also made a pitch for NGA to hold its summer conference this August in Seattle. Despite a slide deck filled with stunning shots of summer evenings in Puget Sound, a humorous Top 10 list of best reasons to come to Seattle in August, and even nods to our fabulous co-chairs Larry and Gary, who we promised would catch a fish at Pike Place Market...it was no dice! Instead, the NGA conference will be in North Dakota. (Yes, Marina must live with losing to North Dakota—home of towering sunflowers and some of the friendliest people on Earth.) Finally, the team also attended a special Saturday meeting that featured N.J. Governor Phil Murphy and U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. Our own Governor Inslee made an appearance at this session, and we also waved hello to him at Reagan National Airport. He was on our flight back home to Sea-Tac. Marina did NOT tell him about losing to North Dakota. Too soon...

WACTA-WA-CCER Spring 2023 Conference

Communications Manager Andrew Lenderman and Career Pathways Manager Joe Wilcox attended the Washington Association of Career and Technical Administrators conference in Centralia, scheduled from Feb. 13-14.

The event drew 235 career and technical educators from around the state. Workforce Board staff set up an exhibitors table and shared information about Career Bridge and the Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) scholarship, which is open for applications through March 17.

Staff also worked with Kevin Smith, CTE Director of the Renton School District, to include WAVE scholarship updates and discussions as part of the conference's agenda. Several educators shared their enthusiasm for the scholarship aimed at high-performing CTE students at Washington's high schools and community and technical colleges. Learn more about WAVE at: <https://wtb.wa.gov/wave/>

